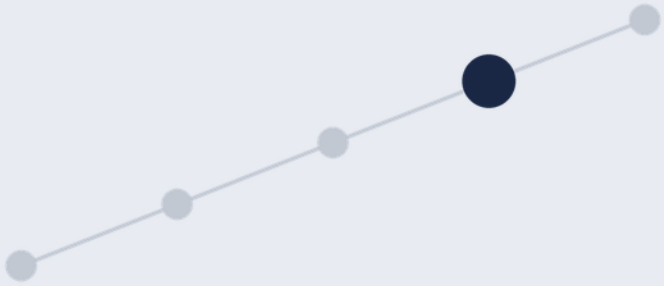
LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME FOUR
COMPANION WORKBOOK



Diligence
Do It to a Finish

"Thoroughness, taking infinite pains, precedes all success."

ORISON SWETT MARDEN

Companion workbook by Richard Gorham

Leadership-Tools.com

LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME FOUR

Diligence

Do It to a Finish

COMPANION WORKBOOK

Written by

RICHARD GORHAM

A companion to the Diligence ebook, based on
Do It to a Finish (1909) by Orison Swett Marden

REVISED 2026

Leadership-Tools.com

ABOUT THIS EDITION

Richard Gorham wrote this companion workbook in 2006 to go with his ebook and audio edition of Orison Swett Marden's *Do It to a Finish* (1909). This 2026 edition has a new design with fill-in spaces you can type into or print, and links to free tools and articles that help with several of the exercises.

The ebook and audio edition are free at Leadership-Tools.com.

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Getting the Most From This Workbook

Read or listen to a chapter of *Diligence* first, then come back to the matching chapter here. Each one starts with a summary of the key points and ends with questions and exercises. The spaces are there for you to write in, by hand on a printed copy or by typing straight into this file.

Give the questions some time. A few of them are easier to answer after a day or two, and it's worth coming back to them once you've thought them over. Where a free tool or article on Leadership-Tools.com can help with an exercise, you'll find a link to it at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER I

The Crime of Carelessness

"The history of the human race is full of the most horrible tragedies caused by carelessness and the inexcusable blunders of those who never formed the habit of accuracy, of thoroughness, of doing things to a complete finish."

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Many innocent people have lost their lives because of dishonest work, carelessness and criminal blundering.
- The majority of wrecks and disasters on land and sea, which cause so much misery and cost so many lives are the direct result of carelessness, thoughtlessness, or half-done, botched and blundering work.
- Carelessness, a lack of thoroughness, are crimes against self, against humanity, that often do more harm than the crimes that make the perpetrator an outcast from society.
- If everybody put his conscience into his work, did it to a complete finish, it would not only reduce the loss of human life, the mangling and maiming of men and women, to a fraction of what it is at present, but it would also give us a higher quality of manhood and womanhood.
- It takes honest work to make an honest character.
- The habit of doing poor, slovenly work will, after a while, make the worker dishonest in other things.
- Every inferior piece of work you do is an enemy which pulls you down, keeps you from getting on in life.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Identify 5 tasks you have seen done carelessly by co-workers or other people you know. Next to each one, write down what resulted from the inferior work.

	Careless task	What resulted
1.		
2.		
3.		

4. _____ _____

5. _____

CHAPTER II

The Relation of Work to Character

"Nothing kills ambition or lowers the life standard quicker than familiarity with inferiority."

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- We unconsciously become like those with whom we are regularly associated.
- Most young people think too much of quantity, and too little of quality in their work.
- We are so easily influenced that the quality which we put into our life-work affects everything else in our lives, and tends to bring our whole conduct to the same level.
- The habit of precision and accuracy strengthens the mentality and improves the whole character.
- After slighting your work, after doing a poor job, you are not quite the same man or woman you were before.
- No one can respect himself who habitually cheats his work, and when self-respect drops, confidence goes with it, and when confidence and self-respect have gone, excellence is impossible.
- One's ambition and ideals need constant watching and cultivation in order to keep the standards up.
- The introduction of inferiority into our work is like introducing subtle poison into the system.
- We were made to be honest. Honesty is our normal expression, and any departure from it demoralizes and taints the whole character.
- Honesty with integrity means that not only you will not lie with your lips, you will also never lie and defraud others with the quality of your work.
- You will like yourself better when you have the approval of your conscience.
- Perfect work harmonizes with the very principles of our being, because we were made for perfection. It fits our very nature.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Identify 3 ways in which you feel your current job or occupation supports those who exhibit a strong character.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Do you feel your work reflects someone with a strong character? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Are the top performers in your industry people of high character? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

If no, identify ways you could better compete against them by showing a higher standard of character to your customers.

_____

_____

_____

CHAPTER III

Blunders That Cost a Million Dollars a Day

"It is a race between negligence and ignorance as to which can make the most trouble."

— Unknown

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The carelessness, inaccuracy, and blundering of employees cost many cities millions of dollars a day.
- It is just as dishonest to express deception in poor work, as to express it from the voice.
- Every man who makes the selfish choice to live with dishonesty, untruthfulness; and allows himself to be wasteful, deteriorates.
- "Made to sell, not for service," would be a good label for the great mass of manufactured articles in our markets today.
- There is no better advertisement like a good reputation.
- Vast sums of money are often paid for the use of a name, because of its great reputation for integrity and square dealing.
- By protecting their reputation from tarnish or decay, they ensured their rightful place in history, and they set a high standard for their industry and indeed, their nation.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

List three companies that immediately come to mind when you think of organizations with a reputation for honesty, service and trustworthiness.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Explain how your current organization rates compared to the above high performing companies.

_____

_____

_____

Now it's time to rate yourself. How does your own work and reputation stack up against the top in your field? How would others in your field describe you? Are you happy with this assessment, or do you have room for improvement? Explain.

CHAPTER IV

The Difference Between Artist and Artisan

"When you finish a thing you ought to be able to say to yourself: 'There, I am willing to stand for that piece of work. It is not pretty well done; it is done as well as I can do it; done to a complete finish. I will stand for that.
I am willing to be judged by it.'"

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Never be satisfied with "fairly good," "pretty good," or "good enough" Accept nothing short of your best.
- Put such a quality into your work that anyone who comes across anything you have ever done will see character in it, individuality in it, your trademark of superiority upon it.
- Your reputation is at stake in everything you do, and your reputation is your most prized capital.
- It is the fine little difference between the good and the best that makes the difference between the artist and the artisan.
- It is the smallest of details that make all the difference.
- When the average man would quit, the superior man or women will go the extra mile and make the extra effort to succeed.
- No other characteristic makes such a strong impression upon an employer as the habit of painstaking effort, carefulness, and accuracy. They recognize the diligent man or woman, the one of the few who has a solid future.
- The "secret of success is to do the common duty uncommonly well.
- The thing that you are now doing will either unlock or bar the door to your next promotion.
- The employer marks many young people for a higher position long before they are aware of it.
- Be very leery of living a lifestyle that does not match your pocketbook. Too much debt has killed a man's dream too often throughout our history.
- It is this little higher up, this little farther on, that counts in the quality of life's work. It is the constant effort to be first-class in everything one attempts that conquers the heights of excellence.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Go online and research 1-2 brand new tools, resources or programs that you will invest time in to support your leadership and character building goals. (Hint: the free tools at Leadership-Tools.com are a good place to start.)

List your activities here and note what you learned from each one.

CHAPTER V

Second-Class Men and Women

"No matter what you do, try to do it as well as it can be done. Have nothing to do with the inferior."

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- A good resolution with which to start out in your career is; never to be second-class in anything.
- Do your best in everything; deal with the best; choose the best; live up to your best.
- In not trying to do your level best, you are training yourself for mediocrity, to live a life filled with disappointment, and perhaps even complete failure.
- You can become a second-class (mediocre) man or woman, simply by not trying to be a first-class (highly accomplished) one.
- Too many people will simply never choose to rise above mediocrity. Some even allow fault, or the blame game, to become a life habit.
- Ill-health fills the ranks of the unmotivated and those lacking ambition.
- It is in every man and woman to be first-class in something, if only he or she will choose to be it. Only the man or woman can hold him or herself back..
- There is no excuse for incompetence in this age of opportunity; no excuse for being less when it is possible to be so much more, and when quality, high standards and a strong character is in such high demand everywhere.
- If you are a king or queen in your calling, no matter how humble it may be, nothing can keep you from success.

The world does not demand that you be a physician, a lawyer, a farmer, or a merchant; but it does demand that whatever you do undertake, you will do it right, will do it with all your might and with all the ability you possess. It demands that you be a master in your industry or area of expertise. It demands your care and complete observance to quality.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

TEST: Let's see if you are currently performing at your peak.

Complete the following exercise: STAND UP! Okay, raise your right hand as high as you can, stand on your toes - reach as far as possible.

Now, reach one inch farther.

GOTCHA! (Most people can ALWAYS go a little farther in most things they do with just a little more effort.) Whether you fell for the above test or not – try it on three other people you know, just to prove the point.

CHAPTER VI

Thoroughness, the Handmaid of Genius

"Diligence – thoroughness, doing things to a complete finish as a rule, characterizes all successful men and women."

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Genius is the art of taking infinite pains.
- All great achievement has been characterized by extreme care, infinite painstaking effort, even to the minutest detail.
- No youth can ever hope to accomplish much who does not have thoroughness and accuracy indelibly fixed in his life-habit.
- The diligent boys and girls are the ones that excel in life, and usually from posts far higher up than those filled by their peers who thought they were too "smart" to be thorough.
- The efficient mind is orderly and methodical; it makes progress slowly by doing everything completely, as well as it can be done.
- Every employer is looking for thoroughness, and devoted workmanship from their employees.
- Thoroughness and reliability, are increasing the power of many young people throughout the civilized world.
- Excuses such as, "it can't wait," "haven't time to be thorough," is too often characteristic of our country, and can be found too easily in our society.
- Many an American youth is willing to stumble through life half prepared for his work, and then blame society because he is a failure.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Managing your time is a key trait of effective leaders, and a good system helps you be more thorough in everything you do. With so many of us juggling work and family schedules, time is often the scarcest thing we have.

Do you use a time management system on a daily basis? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what do you use, and what would make it work better for you? If no, what has kept you from starting one?

TRY THIS FREE TOOL

Project Tracker and Calendar

A free template for keeping your projects, deadlines and next steps in one place, so nothing important is left almost done.

CHAPTER VII

That Fatal “Almost”

"In every country there are multitudes of men and women who are almost something, but just a little short of it.”

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Everywhere we meet people who are “almost” successful. If these people undertake anything, they never quite finish it; they never quite complete their courses at school; they never fully learn a trade or profession. They always manage to stop just short of true success.
- The world is full of half-finished work, — failures which require only a little more persistence, a little finer mechanical training, a little better education, to make them useful to civilization.
- “Almost" is a dangerous word. It has tripped up many a man who might have been successful if he had formed the habit of painstaking thoroughness in youth, the habit of doing everything he undertook to a complete finish.
- There are multitudes of people today plodding along in mediocrity, many of whom lay down right in sight of their goal, just because they were satisfied when they were young with "almost" doing things; "almost" learning their lessons; "almost" finishing the tasks they were given to do.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Ask yourself, are you thorough? Do you take great care to complete tasks to a finish? Explain how you exhibit, or could exhibit, these traits?

Identify 3-5 important skills, talents or attributes that you are currently “almost” an expert in. Determine what it might take in order to become excellent in each.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

CHAPTER VIII

What Every Employer Is Looking For

"If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse-trap than his neighbor, though he may build his house deep in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."

— Emerson

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Diligence, choosing to be thorough in all that you do, indicates the best kind of human resource; it is the best substitute for genius; it is a better capital than cash; it is a better promoter than friends.
- Your reputation is judged by the loyalty you employ, or the lack of it, which you put into doing your job well.
- The employee has something at stake besides his salary. Character, manhood and womanhood are at stake, compared to which salary is nothing.
- If you put your conscience into your work, no matter how poorly you are paid, the fruits of it will come back to you at some time, in some way.
- The man who has dealt in schemes, who has botched his work all his life, must be conscious that he has not been a real man.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Below, list 10 key traits and characteristics that you would look for if you were the top hiring manager of your own business.

	Trait	Your rating	Their rating
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

8. _____ _____ _____

9. _____ _____ _____

10. _____

Next, rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 Excellent, 4 Above Average, 3 Average, 2 Below Average, 1 Poor) for each trait. For an unbiased view, ask a trusted co-worker or your supervisor to rate you too. Most managers see a request like this as a sign of initiative, so there is no need to feel embarrassed.

> TRY THIS FREE TOOL
>
> **360-Degree Feedback Tool**
>
> When you are ready to hear from more than one person, this tool gathers ratings from 5 to 10 people you work with.

CHAPTER IX

Where Only the Best Is Good Enough

"Aspiration lifts the life; groveling lowers it. When we are striving for excellence in everything we do the entire life grows and expands, but if we allow our standards to drop, there is a natural progression that follows, a tendency for a downward effort in all that we do thereafter."

— Orison Swett Marden

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- No one can be really happy who does not believe in his own honesty, does not believe he is trying hard to do right, to be just, clean, and honest.
- Our minds and our bodies are so interconnected that every departure from doing the right thing, from adhering to our core principles, makes us unhappy, and causes us to lose vitality, good health and self-respect.
- There is everything in holding to a high ideal for the sake of your work; for the sake of your soul. Hold the idea of excellence constantly in your mind, for whatever model the mind holds, the life copies.
- What we think, is what we become.
- Never allow yourself for an instant to harbor the thought of deficiency or inferiority. Thinking it alone, will only call it directly to your doorstep.
- There is an indescribable superiority added to the very character and fiber of the man who always puts quality into his work.
- When we are trying with all our might to do our level best, our whole nature improves, everything looks up when we struggle up; everything looks down when we are sliding down hill.
- Half doing things "just for now," expecting to finish them later, has ruined countless, otherwise bright young men and women, because it has led to the habit of slighting one's work.
- What a life-motto this would be! "WHERE ONLY THE BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH."

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Adopt this life-motto as your very own. Hang it up in your bedroom, in your office or place of business, put it in your wallet, weave it into the texture of everything you do, and your life-work will be what everyone's should be: a masterpiece.

Only the best is good enough.

Where will you put this motto so you see it every day?

What is one piece of work you will finish this week to the standard of “only the best is good enough”?

NOTES

PUT THIS VOLUME TO WORK

Keep Going

The answers you wrote in this workbook show where your standard is high and where it slips. These free resources help you raise it and keep it there.

- **How to Prioritize Work Projects** Decide what gets your best effort first.
- **Management Development Analysis** Rate yourself on the skills a manager needs and pick one to build.
- **Master Action Plan (M.A.P.)** Keep your goals and next actions on one page.

THE LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME ONE	Ambition
VOLUME TWO	Character
VOLUME THREE	The Hour of Opportunity
VOLUME FOUR	**Diligence: Do It to a Finish**
VOLUME FIVE	Persistence: An Iron Will

Each volume comes with the ebook, the audio edition and a companion workbook, free at **Leadership-Tools.com**.